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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/19/2018

TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS MARR

SUBJECT: TURKEY: SECURITY SUPPORT FOR 2009 AFGHAN ELECTIONS
WILL BE REVIEWED IN EARLY JANUARY

REF: SECSTATE 131480

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) We delivered reftel demarche to MFA NATO Operations Section Head Turker Ari and Afghanistan Desk Officer Emre Karagol on December 19. Ari expressed appreciation for the non-paper, noting that the information is timely: an interagency senior working-level (likely at the deputy undersecretary level) meeting is scheduled to convene in the first week of January to review GOT policy in advance of the NATO summit in April. According to Ari, Afghanistan is at the top of the agenda for the meeting, and election support is the top issue for the discussion on Afghanistan.

¶2. (C) Ari said the GOT has received the November 30 SHAPE paper estimating the contributions required for election support forces (ESF) and that the Turkish General Staff (TGS) is reviewing the requirements in advance of the January 14 ESF force generation conference at SHAPE. Ari said Turkey will likely want to see what other Allies will contribute first, highlighting Turkey's contributions to ISAF since its inception and noting GOT desires to see other Allies share the burden. We pushed back, emphasizing that it is critical for the most capable Allies at NATO to signal the importance of supporting Afghan elections by making significant contributions now. We highlighted the importance of rapid reaction forces and additional flexibility for ISAF commanders to respond to threats quickly, and asked that the GOT explore the possibility of lifting, even on a provisional basis, the caveats on the use of their forces in Afghanistan at least for the election period. Ari took our point on board and said he will update us on the outcome of GOT discussions on NATO summit preparations in general and on Afghanistan in particular.

¶3. (C) Comment: Turkey has indicated greater willingness to support ANA and ANP training. Ensuring successful elections in Afghanistan may be the most compelling rationale for Turkey to step up its contributions significantly, but it will be very hard for Turkey to send additional combat forces to Afghanistan. GOT officials remain concerned about potential political blowback if Turkish troops are killed in Afghanistan, which will make it difficult for Turkey to sustain its deployment there. The GOT has consistently demurred on requests for an additional maneuver battalion, noting their own extensive operational requirements in countering the PKK in the Southeast. We will have several opportunities in the coming weeks to engage on senior levels with Turkish officials to encourage them to increase their contribution to international efforts in Afghanistan. End Comment.

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Jeffrey